

# The Historian

A Quarterly Publication of the Fallbrook Historical Society

Fall 2021

## HISTORY OF FALLBROOK LIBRARY



Jess Hardy's Drug Store as it looked in August 1914. Located on the west side on Main Ave. in Fallbrook, The 1<sup>st</sup> branch of the San Diego County Free Library System opened here beginning May 1913 until 1915.

Opening in May 1913, Fallbrook was the first San Diego County library branch. 1) The library was due to the efforts of The Fallbrook Woman's Club, then known as the Woman's Saturday Afternoon Club. 2) The Club took a proactive role when they heard that San Diego County planned to form a free library system.

In February 1913, the Woman's Club met with the recently hired County librarian, Jennie Herrman. 3) The Woman's Saturday Afternoon Club then wrote a letter to the County Board of Supervisors requesting a branch library for Fallbrook. The letter offered to provide space, lights, shelving, appoint a librarian, and to raise a portion of the librarian's salary. 4) Fallbrook's offer was soon accepted.

In May 1913 the library opened with 250 books on a few shelves set in a corner of Hardy's Drugstore on Main Ave. Pharmacist Jess Hardy was appointed as Fallbrook librarian. The Woman's Club regularly hosted cultural and social events as fundraisers for library expenses.

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Each month the County librarian would deliver new titles and take some of the older volumes back to be circulated with other branches that began to open around the County. By the end of 1914, the Fallbrook library had over 600 books, 5) outgrowing the space in Hardy's Drugstore.

The growing library became a constant challenge for the Fallbrook community to arrange adequate space. Over 100 years, the Fallbrook branch library would move a dozen times around town.

In 1915 the library moved into Vic Westfall's Hardware store on the SE corner of Main & Alvarado. Westfall was the librarian for ten years. By the end of 1916, the Fallbrook library had 1,450 books. 6)

By 1924, the library moved into the Ropers' Grocery Store on the NW corner of Main and Fig Street. 7) The Fallbrook branch library would remain on this corner for the next twelve years. Today, this corner is the well-known site of a series of coffee shops. In 1926, the Ropers sold the market to Ewell and Cora Robertson.

Cora Robertson ran the library until 1931 when Fred and Evelyn Huscher purchased the grocery store. Evelyn became the Fallbrook librarian while Fred Huscher concentrated on expanding the market business. In September 1936, the Fallbrook branch library moved with the Huscher Grocery and Meat Market to North Main Ave., next door to the post office on the SE corner of Main and Hawthorne. 8) Because of the lack of space in Huscher's busy store, the library remained here for less than a year.

The County librarian announced In July 1937 that the library would move into the Lamb Building, along with other County services, next to C.E. Lamb's store which was on the SW corner of Main and Alvarado. Evelyn Huscher continued as the Fallbrook Librarian. 9) For the first time the Fallbrook library would be in a building separate from any business. The library would remain here for the next nine years.

***Library Briefly Closes:*** In November 1946, the Lamb building suddenly became unavailable. The Justice Court and the Sheriff's office moved next door into the El Real Hotel. But with no room for the books in the hotel, the Fallbrook library was temporarily closed. The inventory of books was taken for storage in San Diego with the County library. Evelyn Huscher announced to Fallbrook residents with checked out titles to retain those books until a new library was opened. 10) One month later, on January 17, 1947, the library re-opened in the Johnston building at 303 S. Main on the SW corner of Main and Elder St. Evelyn Huscher announced that books being held at home could be returned now. 11) This would be the library for the next four years while the new County building was being constructed at Alvarado and Vine.

Huscher retired in 1951 and Mildred Geyer became the librarian. Geyer's first crises was that the Johnston building on Main and Elder needed to close for repairs before the new County building on Alvarado St. was ready. The library remained open by temporarily moving to a room at Fallbrook High School on Ivy Street for several months in 1951. 12)

In November 1951 the library wing opened for business with more than 4,000 books 13) in the new County building at 130 E. Alvarado on the NW corner of Alvarado and Vine Ave. The Justice Court and Sheriff department shared this building. The library stayed here for eleven years, until 1962 when the County decided to evict the library to expand the Sheriff substation. However, the County promised to construct a building for the Fallbrook branch library in the future. Meanwhile, in December 1962, the library moved into larger space at 133 N. Main Ave on the SE corner of Main and Hawthorne. The County signed a five-year lease to pay \$110 a month here until the new permanent library was built. 14)

Friends of the Fallbrook Library was founded in April 1963 to represent the Community in the design of the new County library. Even before it was built, the Friends raised thousands of dollars to supply the new library with books and equipment.

Library Burns Down: In October 1969, the library moved into its new building at 124 S. Mission Rd. where it is today, with about 30,000 books. 15) Tragically, 16 years later, on April 1, 1985, the library burned down with all books in a teenager's act of arson. Once again, the old Hardware store on the SE corner of Alvarado and Main became the temporary library. Initially, the library shelves in the Hardware store were stocked with the thousands of books that had been checked out when the fire occurred. Plus several thousand more books were donated by the community. Additionally, thousands more titles were donated to Fallbrook by other County branches. The Friends of Fallbrook Library played a major role in the County's planning of a new facility and raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the construction. 16)

A new larger library was built upon the same site as the burned facility. It opened in February 1987 with 50,000 books. 17)

But there is one more chapter. In the year 2000, it was realized that the 1987 library needed to be rebuilt larger and better. Serious fundraising began anew, and a temporary library was set up at 113 S. Main, where Salon Ana is today. The Bottom Shelf Bookstore was next door at the site of today's Chamber of Commerce.

The old facility was demolished in October 2009. On January 22, 2011, the new state of the art facility opened in its current location, 18) almost 98 years after the first Fallbrook branch library opened in Hardy's Drugstore.

-Tom Frew, Fallbrook Historical Society Historian

Footnotes:

- 1) Letter from San Diego County Librarian, Jennie Herman, dated December 28, 1916, published in the Fallbrook Enterprise January 5, 1917. Hermann states Fallbrook was the 1<sup>st</sup> county library station in May 1913. The first public announcement of the library in Fallbrook appeared in a May 30, 1913 newspaper ad for Hardy's Drugstore
- 2) Woman's Club website. Originally formed in 1907 as The Saturday Afternoon Club, by 1913 it was frequently referred to by themselves and others in multiple newspaper stories as The Woman's Club.
- 3) Fallbrook Enterprise, March 7, 1913 news item. Jennie Herrman was hired by the County in 1913 at a \$2,000 salary per Journal of San Diego History Jan 12, 2006, by Suzanne Ledeboer.
- 4) Letter from Saturday Afternoon Club dated February 11, 1913 to Board of Supervisors.
- 5) Letter from County Librarian, Jennie Herman in Fallbrook Enterprise January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1917.
- 6) Jeanne Hermann's summary in Fallbrook Enterprise, April 17, 1917.
- 7) Fallbrook Enterprise May 23, 1924. Ropers are library custodians. Enterprise May 26, 1926 Ropers have turned over the Market & Library to the Robertsons.
- 8) Fallbrook Enterprise Sept 18, 1936.
- 9) Fallbrook Enterprise, July 9, 1937. Gladys Huscher's adult son & daughter would help assist her husband with the market business. Gladys kept her county job as the local librarian at the Lamb building.
- 10) Fallbrook Enterprise, November 1, 1946 & December 13, 1946
- 11) Fallbrook Enterprise, January 17, 1947
- 12) Fallbrook Enterprise, June 15, 1951
- 13) Fallbrook Enterprise, November 16, 1951
- 14) Fallbrook Enterprise, April 19, 1962 & December 13, 1962.
- 15) Fallbrook Enterprise, July 11, 1985
- 16) The Story of the Fallbrook Library 1913-2011 by Friends of the Fallbrook Library.
- 17) The Story of the Fallbrook Library 1913-2011 by Friends of the Fallbrook Library, page 10.
- 18) Fallbrooklibraryfriends.org

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- November 20:** Annual Presentation by the  
Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War  
at The Pittenger House
- December 4:** Fallbrook Christmas Parade  
Look for our entry with the 1860's Brougham  
Ladies Afternoon Carriage
- December 5:** Christmas Open House "Whistle Stop Christmas"  
On the grounds of The Heritage Center  
Santa Claus will be there!

**VISIT OUR WEBPAGE: [www.fallbrookhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.fallbrookhistoricalsociety.org)**

The Fallbrook Historical Society  
Is proud to announce

NEW OPEN DAYS AND HOURS  
SATURDAYS *AND* SUNDAYS  
1 pm to 4 pm

THE HERITAGE CENTER MUSEUMS

*Includes: Main Museum*

*Pittenger House*

*Gem & Mineral Room*

*Ford Room*

*Donald J. Rivers Interpretive Center "The Barn"*

*Private Tours are Available*

*By emailing*

[info@fallbrookhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@fallbrookhistoricalsociety.org)

THE RECHE SCHOOLHOUSE

*Includes: The Historic Schoolhouse*

*The Hindorff Adobe*

*The Indian Milling Stones*

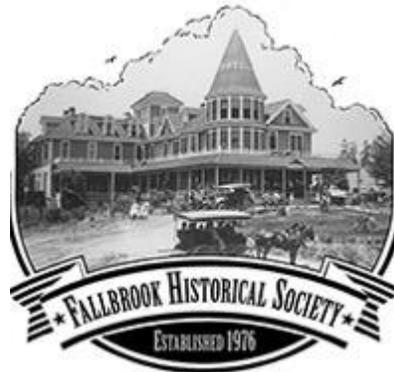
is open the

THIRD SATURDAY OF EVERY MONTH

1 pm to 4 pm



*The Fallbrook Historical Society's mission is to bring history to life by educating the community and others about Fallbrook's rich heritage*



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